

**TO:** The Honorable John G. Rowland, Governor, State of Connecticut  
The Honorable Thomas Gaffey, Senate Chairman,  
Education Committee  
The Honorable Thomas Herlihy, Senate Ranking Member,  
Education Committee  
The Honorable Cameron Staples, House Chairman,  
Education Committee  
The Honorable Robert Heagney, House Ranking Member,  
Education Committee

**FROM:** Theodore S. Sergi  
Commissioner of Education

**SUBJECT:** Progress Report on The Hartford Public Schools

**DATE:** June 4, 2002

The attached report on the progress and needs of The Hartford Public Schools is presented in accordance with Section 7 of Special Act 01-7. These reports document many of the efforts of the State Board of Trustees and the Hartford administration to address the statutory requirements of Special Act 97-4 and its amendments.

A great deal has happened from June 1997 to June 2002 to improve the Hartford Public Schools, but a great deal more remains to be done. Some of the core elements related to financial systems, facilities planning, reading instruction, curriculum and staff development, access to technology, the purchasing process for instructional materials and supplies, accreditation of schools, policies and procedures and collective bargaining agreements have all been improved dramatically, and there has been a visible gain in student progress on the Connecticut Mastery Test. However, student achievement and outcomes will need to be improved *further – and sustained over time in all grade levels* – in order to establish a trend of comprehensive progress.

An analysis of student performance indicators for 1996-97 and 2000-01 that compares Hartford's data to statewide results (see attached June 4, 2002, transmittal to the State Board of Education) shows visible improvements in student achievement and a closing of the gap between Hartford and state averages, but this progress must still be seen in the context of the overall low level of Hartford student achievement.

At present, the priority needs and concerns of the Hartford Public Schools include (1) insufficient funding for the 2002-03 budget; (2) more focus on middle and high school student outcomes, equal to that already established for elementary school students; (3) greater attention to special needs students; and (4) more rapid progress in the area of school facilities.

**Currently, the most pressing issue for the Mayor, Hartford City Council, the Governor and legislative leadership is whether the Hartford Public Schools can continue to make progress with a proposed budget in 2002-03 that apparently will be less than that of 2001-02, and with the contracted salaries of all employees increasing over the previous year.**

The recent progress of the Hartford Public Schools can be attributed to its teachers, system leaders, parents, community groups and students. I believe that over the last five years, many Hartford participants have changed their actions for the better, and away from the pre-1997 climate of accepting failure. Everyone involved should be commended for the new spirit of progress and optimism, and encouraged to keep asking, "What can I do?" and "How can we work together to improve student achievement?" Hartford's children deserve no less.

Attachments: Transmittal to State Board of Education and Progress Report (June 12, 2002)

cc: Senator Kevin Sullivan, President Pro Tempore  
Senator George Jepsen, Majority Leader  
Senator Louis DeLuca, Republican Leader  
Representative Moira Lyons, Speaker of the House  
Representative David Pudlin, Majority Leader  
Representative Robert Ward, Minority Leader  
Mr. Dean Pagani, Chief of Staff  
Ms. Brenda Sisco, Legislative Director  
Clerk of the Senate  
Clerk of the House of Representatives  
Clerk of the Education Committee  
Office of Legislative Research  
State Library  
Legislative Library

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education  
and  
State Board of Trustees for the Hartford Public Schools

**FROM:** Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

**SUBJECT:** Progress Report on The Hartford Public Schools

**DATE:** June 4, 2002 (for June 4, 2002, State Board of Trustees meeting and  
June 12, 2002, State Board of Education meeting)

The attached report on the progress and needs of the Hartford Public Schools documents many of the efforts of the State Board of Trustees and the Hartford administration to address the statutory requirements of Special Act 97-4 and its amendments: to increase Hartford student achievement; to enhance the quality, adequacy and equality of educational opportunities for Hartford students; and to authorize the State Board of Trustees to allocate and manage resources efficiently and effectively.

**A great deal has happened from June 1997 to June 2002 to improve the Hartford Public Schools, but a great deal more remains to be done. Some of the core elements related to financial systems, facilities planning, reading instruction, curriculum and staff development, access to technology, the purchasing process for instructional materials and supplies, accreditation of schools, policies and procedures and collective bargaining agreements have all been improved dramatically, and there has been a visible gain in student progress on the Connecticut Mastery Test. However, student achievement and outcomes will need to be improved *further – and sustained over time in all grade levels* – in order to establish a trend of comprehensive progress.**

**Please see the attached chart of student performance indicators for 1996-97 and 2000-01 that compares Hartford's data to statewide results. There are visible improvements in student achievement and a closing of the gap between Hartford and state averages, but this progress must still be seen in the context of the overall low level of Hartford student achievement.**

At present, the priority needs and concerns of the Hartford Public Schools include (1) insufficient funding for the 2002-03 budget; (2) more focus on middle and high school student outcomes, equal to that already established for elementary school students; (3) greater attention to special needs students; and (4) more rapid progress in the area of school facilities.

Each member of the State Board of Trustees continues to be actively engaged in the review of districtwide initiatives, parent and community involvement, fiscal accountability and the management of school construction projects. The Hartford administration and Superintendent Anthony S. Amato continue to work with the State Board of Trustees to improve student achievement and enhance districtwide programs outlined in the board's 2001-02 goals and

objectives. Curricular improvements in the district's elementary science program and plans to implement a new districtwide social studies program in fall 2002 have been noted. The accreditation of all Hartford elementary, middle and high schools is proceeding. Currently, five elementary schools have received initial accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC): Simpson-Waverly, Kennelly, Barnard-Brown, Mary Hooker and Mark Twain. Hartford officials are developing plans to address NEASC recommendations from visiting committee reports submitted to elementary and high schools. M.D. Fox Elementary School and Weaver High School should receive notification shortly concerning their accreditation status.

As previously stated, current challenges that the Trustees and the Hartford administration are examining include (a) ensuring appropriate access to curricular programs and services for students with special needs, (b) expediting the renovations of the first four schools in the long-range facilities plan (Rawson, Naylor, Burr and Webster), (c) completing the renovation of Hartford Public High School, and (d) continuing to provide quality educational programs and services with anticipated reductions in the 2002-03 operating budget.

The Trustees have met with the Hartford Court of Common Council and have expressed their collective concern that the combined loss of special state appropriations to the Hartford schools and lack of additional support from municipal revenue sources will have a direct impact on student and operational services, including the possible closure of schools and programs and dismissal of personnel.

Faced with these concerns and with 2002-03 budgetary plans to implement intradistrict school choice in 11 schools and open three schools as state-approved host-interdistrict magnet schools, members of the State Board of Trustees, the legislated Advisory Council to the Trustees and Superintendent Amato requested that they have an opportunity to meet with the Commissioner of Education. The regular May 2002 meeting held with the Commissioner, state monitors and Superintendent Amato was an opportunity to have this discussion. At this meeting, school principals serving on the Advisory Council presented additional evidence of gains in student achievement and stated the need for continued resources to sustain improvement. Advisory Council and State Board of Trustees members also highlighted the continuing economic disparity in per capita income (as noted in new federal census data) between parents of Hartford students and residents in other Connecticut towns that ultimately results in additional support services required for students and families.

**Currently, the most pressing issue for the Mayor, Hartford City Council, the Governor and legislative leadership, is whether the Hartford Public Schools can continue to make progress with a proposed budget in 2002-03 that apparently will be less than that of 2001-02, and with the contracted salaries of all employees increasing over the previous year.**

The State Department of Education continues to assist the district in a variety of ways, including the development of curricular assessments, the implementation of the district's new teacher evaluation instrument, support for priority school administrators and reading initiatives in these schools, and technical assistance to improve special education programs and services. The Trustees and Superintendent Amato should continue to find new ways to engage teachers, parents, higher education institutions, and corporate and community partners to have meaningful roles in realizing adopted goals and objectives for the district.

## Change in Hartford Student Performance Indicators Since 1996-97

Indicator	Most Current Year					School Year 1996-97		
	Year	Hartford	State	Hartford as % of State	(1)	Hartford	State	Hartford as % of State
CMT Math 4, 6, 8: % at/above goal (2)	2001-02	30.9	59.2	52.2%	↑	18	56	32.1%
CMT Reading 4, 6, 8: % at/above goal (2)	2001-02	25.3	62.6	40.4%	↑	19	60	31.7%
CMT Writing 4, 6, 8: % at/above goal (2)	2001-02	35.7	60.0	59.5%	↑	25	52	48.1%
CAPT Math: % at/above Goal (2)	2000-01	8	44.6	17.9%	↔	6	42	14.3%
CAPT Science: % at/above Goal (2)	2000-01	7	43.4	16.1%	↔	6	35	17.1%
CAPT Reading/Language Arts: % at/above Goal (2)	2000-01	9	42.2	21.3%	↔	7	35	20.0%
CAPT Writing/Interdisciplinary: % at/above Goal (2)	2000-01	17	48.7	34.9%	↑	11	38	28.9%
Dropouts: 4-year Cohort Rate (3)	2001	22.9	11.4	200.9%	↑	44.1	15.7	280.9%
Dropouts: Annual 1-year Event Rate	2001	11.5	3.0	383.3%	↓	13.4	3.9	343.6%
% Graduates to Educational Activity	2001	75.0	79.1	94.8%	↑	65.6	75.6	86.8%
% Graduates Employed	2001	14.5	17.1	84.8%	↑	11.2	18.5	60.5%
Physical Fitness: Percent Passing all 4 Tests (2)	2000-01	18.5	34.2	54.1%	↔	15.3	28.1	54.4%
AP: % of Seniors Taking at Least One Exam	2001	8.8	16.3	53.7%	↑	3.1	11.8	26.2%
AP: % of Examinations Passed	2001	28.1	70.5	39.9%	↓	37.8	73.1	51.8%
SAT I Total Score	2001	754	1005	75.0%	↔	759	1008	75.3%
SAT I: Percent of Graduates Taking	2001	71.5	77.6	92.1%	↑	47.8	73.7	64.9%
Graduates with Credit in Algebra	2001	88.3	90.0	98.1%	↑	71.9	85.2	84.4%
Graduates with 3+ Credits in a World Language	2001	34.8	55.5	62.7%	↑	26.2	51.7	50.7%

NOTES: (1) An upward arrow indicates improvement of at least five percentage points relative to the state average.

(2) Comparisons of results are across two generations of the tests with some differences in the components.

(3) Some improvement due to better record keeping starting in 1996-97.

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 4, 2002